

Justice Chamberlin praised for fairness, intellect, integrity at investiture ceremony

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Judges and friends on Sunday praised new Supreme Court Justice Robert P. Chamberlin as a smart, fair, hard-working judge of high integrity.

On a day when the temperature didn't climb above freezing, colleagues, family and friends from far and near filled the second floor courtroom at the DeSoto County Courthouse in Hernando to congratulate Justice Chamberlin and wish him well in his work as the newest member of the Mississippi Supreme Court.

Justice Chamberlin told the audience that they might not agree with his judicial decisions, but they should agree with the way he reached those decisions. "My promise to you is when you look at the decision, you will agree that he researched the case, he researched the law and he made the decision that he thought was correct and in conformity to the law."

Justice Chamberlin, 51, of Hernando, took the oath of office at the Supreme Court in Jackson on Jan. 3 so that he could go to work. The formal investiture, held Jan. 8 in his hometown, is a court tradition.

Chancellor Percy Lynchard, master of ceremonies for the investiture, said DeSoto County residents are pleased and proud that Justice Chamberlin joined the Supreme Court. He said Justice Chamberlin's legal abilities, work ethic and judicial temperament are second to none.

Attorney William Austin Jr. of Southaven hired Chamberlin to work at his firm shortly after Chamberlin was admitted to the Bar. Austin said he was smart, serious and dedicated to the practice of law. "It didn't take me long to know that Bobby was going to be a difference-maker," Austin said. "It's been a great pleasure to have been his boss or senior partner for 10 years and to watch him take off like a rocket. He's going to be a fine judge on the Supreme Court."

Retired Supreme Court Justice George C. Carlson Jr. of Batesville also praised Justice Chamberlin's legal abilities. He called Justice Chamberlin "a Christian man of high moral character, integrity and with a strong work ethic that will serve him well at the Supreme Court."

Retired Justice Ann H. Lamar of Senatobia, whose place Justice Chamberlin took on the high court, recalled their days as circuit judges of the 17th Judicial District. Justice Chamberlin came to the trial court bench with ideas for



Justice Robert P. Chamberlin



Sen. Roger Wicker



Ann H. Lamar



William Austin



George C. Carlson Jr.



Chief Justice Bill Waller Jr., at right, speaks before he administers the oath to Justice Robert P. Chamberlin, at left, at a Jan. 8 investiture in Hernando. Will Chamberlin, Justice Chamberlin's son, is at center. Sen. Roger Wicker is seated at right.

improvement, including creating a Drug Court. "It was his vision, his push that brought that Drug Court into being," she said. "He's an intelligent man. He knows the law. He is passionate about his work and he is committed. He is a problem solver. That's what drug courts are about."

Chief Justice Bill Waller Jr. said before he administered the ceremonial oath to Justice Chamberlin that the 17th Circuit Drug Court under his guidance was the largest and most effective drug court in the state.

U.S. Sen. Roger Wicker said that Justice Chamberlin has a reputation for fairness and equality. He recalled doing community theater. One of his favorite roles was Atticus Finch. He quoted Finch's closing statement to the jury from *To Kill a Mockingbird*: "...in this country our courts are the great levelers. In our courts, all men are created equal....That's no ideal to me. That is a living, working reality!" Referring to Justice Chamberlin, he said, "That has been 'a living, working reality' in his courtroom for decades."

Chamberlin's wife Kim Chamberlin read an excerpt from novelist and screenwriter Raymond Chandler's literary essay "The Simple Art of Murder." "But down these mean streets a man must go who is not himself mean, who is neither tarnished nor afraid....He must be a complete man and a common man and yet an unusual man. He must be, to use a rather weathered phrase, a man of honor – by instinct, by inevitability, without thought of it, and certainly without saying it. He must be the best man in his world and a good enough man for any world."

Former Justice Lamar said, "What a challenge he has ahead and what exciting days ahead!"